

Message Text

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63/65

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /051 W
----- 025496

R 141216Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3308
INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

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CORRECTED COPY (E.O., TAGS AND SUBJECT)

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IV
SUBJECT: HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY SUCCESSION

1. IN COURSE ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIS'S COURTESY CALL ON PHILIPPE YACE, PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF PDCI (SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY OF IVORY COAST), THE LATTER INFORMED US OF PRESIDENT FELIX HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY'S DECISION TO ELIMINATE AMBIGUITIES IN THE IVORIAN CONSTITUTION AS CONCERNS SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY IN THE EVENT OF DEATH OR INCAPACITY OF THE PRESIDENT. YACE SAID A BILL WOULD BE INTRODUCED SHORTLY IN THIS, AN ELECTION YEAR.

2. THE CHANGE WILL BE FROM THE PRESENT CONCEPT THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY "SHALL DESIGNATE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY" TO THE STATEMENT THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HIMSELF SHALL SUCCEED THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND SERVE UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC'S MANDATE. THIS WOULD MEAN, SAID YACE, THAT EVEN IF THE BETTER PART OF THE PRESIDENT'S FIVE-YEAR TERM WAS

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STILL AHEAD, THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD

CARRY ON AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. IT WOULD KEEP PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS SIMULTANEOUS.

3. YACE NOTED THAT THE AMBIGUITY WENT BACK TO COLONIAL DAYS WHEN THE ENTENTE STATES HAD SIMILAR CONSTITUTIONS AND UPPER DID NOT WANT TO HAVE A BOBO PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SUCCEED A MOSSI PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

4. COMMENT: YACE HAD JUST COME FROM A MEETING WITH HOUPHOUET AND SEEMED ZSGER TO TELL US THIS BIT OF NEWS, WHICH WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLIC FOR A FEW DAYS. IT CLEARS UP AND AMBIGUITY THAT HAS GIVEN "PRESIDENT-WATCHERS" IN IVORY COAST PAUSE FOR MANY YEARS. IT WOULD ALSO APPEAR TO BESTOW THE SUCCESSION MANTLE CLEARLY ON YACE'S SHOULDERS, IF ONLY FOR A TRANSITION PERIOD. ONCE THIS PROPOSAL BECOMES PUBLIC, WE SHALL SEEK WIDER VIEWS ON ITS FULL IMPLICATIONS.

SMITH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ABIDJA04045
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750170-0246
From: ABIDJAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750551/aaaabtw.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <09 DEC 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY SUCCESSION
TAGS: PFOR, IV, (HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY, FELIX)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006